Segmentation

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particular films. In the thirties it was claimed by technicians that the cutting was fast at Warner Brothers and slow at MGM, and although on the basis of the figures collected so far, and remembering in particular the Tarzan films mentioned in a previous article (*Film Quarterly,* Fall 1976), the MGM part of the claim must be doubtful, it does seem to be the case that Warners films in the later thirties are *on the average* cut faster than those from other studios. Although certainty in this waits on the collection of even larger numbers of A.S.L.'s, one can see that there were no contract directors at Warners in the thirties who went in for long takes at all, although there were very rare visitors such as Howard Hawks and William Wyler who made films tending in this direction. The former's *Ceiling Zero* of 1936 has an A.S.L. of 12 seconds and the latter's *The Letter* of 1939 has an A.S.L. of 18 seconds, despite their being edited by regular Warners editors (William Holmes and George Amy respectively) who did not impose on them the kind of cutting rates used in their regular work for Michael Curtiz and others. In fact at this period Curtiz's films have an A.S.L. of 6 to 7 seconds consistently, and Mervyn LeRoy's an A.S.L. of 9 seconds, even though they were not all cut by the same editors. Of the other Warner directors, Enright and Keighley worked with A.S.L.s of 5 to 6 seconds and Mayo and Goulding with 9 to 10 seconds. This last value is as high as regular Warner directors went in the thirties, but when the long take trend was well under way in Hollywood in the late forties some of the Warner directors moved with it to some extent. For exam-

ple, Curtiz went up to an A.S.L. of 9 seconds with *Mildred Pierce* (1945), and then on to 10.5 seconds with *The Unsuspected* (1947) and *Flamingo Road* (1949). And newer Warner directors like Curtis Bernhardt and Jean Negulesco were up to A.S.L.'s of 12 seconds by this time.

Although some of the directors who helped to consolidate the trend towards longer takes had come into films from the theater fairly recently, there were others involved who had been in Hollywood for decades, particularly amongst those who began the movement in 1940, so the cause of this development cannot be the influence of the theater. Perhaps here, as in other situations, we should opt for the simplest possible explanation— that directors bored with shooting film after film in the studios, according to the minutely broken-down shot patterns that had prevailed for so many years, seized with relief upon the new and thus challenging longer-take style once it had been pioneered in *Holiday* (1936) and subsequent films made by George Cukor. Pure novelty is, after all, a considerable aesthetic force in itself.

Long-take filming also has the advantage of preventing the ever more obtrusive producers from interfering with the editing of a film. (In 1927 there were 34 producers or supervisors involved in the production of 743 feature films in Hollywood. In 1937 220 producers worked on 484 movies. The number of directors working in the respective years hardly changed going from 246 to 234.) The next steps from this last piece of information take us onto ground that has been well trodden in writing about films since the thirties.

BRIAN HENDERSON

Segmentation

The earth it selfe being round, every step wee make upon it, must necessarily bee a segment, an arch of a circle.
                    —John Donne, *Sermon* LXVII.

In film studies as in other disciplines, old problems tend to reappear under new names. What

are the basic units of film? How are they (or how should they be) combined in the filmic composition? These are the oldest, most frequently asked questions in film theory. Film semiotics has its own history within the larger history of film theory, though it has always presented itself as bypassing or supplanting earlier efforts. Since it

appeared in the early sixties, film semiotics has undergone a complex evolution—in relation to the old problems of film theory as well as to the new ones it defined. In the present, at the (temporary) end of this history, we find textual semiotics. This is a new system and in it we find a new problem, which faces every analyst of a filmic text: the problem of *segmentation*. It asks: How shall I divide up the filmic text in order to talk about it?

This article concerns the problem of segmentation and its theoretical context. Its principal focus is the development and treatment of this concept within the texts of film semiotics. The relation of segmentation and the theories which support it to film theory is a large topic that will have to be pursued elsewhere. But concern with such relations is implicit in the inquiries undertaken here.

To talk about segmentation, one must talk about Roland Barthes, particularly about *S/Z* (1970). This study has been enormously influential on textual semiotics in many domains, including, notably, that of film. Thus the first questions to be raised are predictable ones. Can a segmentation scheme and set of prescriptions for the textual analysis of literature be used for film texts? Have those using the scheme and prescriptions made a theoretical bridge from the textual semiotics of literature to that of film? If so, what are its components and is it adequate? These questions catch others, some perhaps more interesting, in their nets. In any case, they serve to open up an area that has been virtually unexamined.

S/Z deals with many subjects besides segmentation, but this is our interest at the moment. Barthes seems to say that when it comes to segmentation, total permissiveness is the rule. The working convenience of the analyst governs. The analyst may divide up the text in any way conducive to the analysis. In any case, in the new textual semiotics, it seems no longer possible to prescribe or proscribe theoretically, i.e., in advance of the *praxis* of reading, any system of segmentation. Barthes says:

If we want to remain attentive to the plural of a text . . . , we must renounce structuring this text in large masses, as was done by classical rhetoric and by secondary-school explication: no *construction* of the text: everything signifies ceaselessly and several times, but without being delegated to a great final ensemble, to an ultimate structure. Whence the idea, and so to speak, the necessity, of a gradual analysis of a single text. It is . . . to substitute for the simple representative model another model, whose very gradualness would guarantee what may be productive in the classic text: for the *step-by-step* method, through its very slowness and dispersion, avoids penetrating, reversing the tutor text, giving an internal image of it: it is never anything but the *decomposition* (in the cinematographic sense) of the work of reading: a *slow motion*, so to speak, neither wholly image nor wholly analysis.

We shall therefore star the text, separating, in the manner of a minor earthquake, the blocks of signification of which reading grasps only the smooth surface, imperceptibly soldered by the movement of sentences, the flowing discourse of narration, the "naturalness" of ordinary language. The tutor signifier will be cut up into a series of brief, contiguous fragments, which we shall call *lexias*, since they are units of reading. This cutting up, admittedly, will be arbitrary in the extreme; it will imply no methodological responsibility, since it will bear on the signifier, whereas the proposed analysis bears solely on the signified. The lexia will include sometimes a few words, sometimes several sentences; it will be a matter of convenience: it will suffice that the lexia be the best possible space in which we can observe meanings. . . .   (pp 11-13)

What do Barthes's specifications mean for the textual analysis of film? What have they meant so far? What has happened in film textual analysis to date? When we move to film the first fact we encounter is the overwhelming predominance of the Metzian *grand syntagmatique* in nearly all textual analysis thus far. Typically the problem of segmenting the text is posed, usually by that name, and nearly always at the beginning of the analysis. Almost without exception, the method of segmentation chosen and applied is that of the *grand syntagmatique*. One may say generally that any textual analysis in *Screen, Communications, Ça Cinéma,* or even occasional American journals dealing with film semiotics, such as *Film Reader*, will use the GS in whole or part, or explain why it is not used. (Some of the latter passages read like apologies.) Since these are precisely the journals where textual analyses (in the post-structuralist, Barthesian sense) are most likely to appear, one soon discovers that the problem of segmentation in film analysis has in effect been settled, apparently by common agreement.

This defacto unanimity is odd, however. It has followed no theoretical debate on the matter—no editorials, manifestos, or theoretical statements, setting forth, defending, deriving, or justifying the general line of GS segmentation. It is a prac-

tice, or set of practices, without a theory. No one has shown that the GS can or should serve as universal scheme of segmentation for film textual analysis. Nor can the demonstration be found in the texts of Metz, who has not considered the question. The question has not been raised by anyone. Most interesting of all, practice proceeds *as though* the question had been raised and resolved definitely, so that it never need be raised or even referred to again.

There is a logical paradox here which we should explore, since it might clarify our inquiry if we do and ensnare it if we do not. We may say that we have defined so far the posing of a question and the posing of an answer to that question. The question: What mode(s) of segmentation of films would be homologous to Barthes's segmentation mode in *S/Z*? (This question is posed against the background of a more general one: What would be a textual semiotics of film, homologous to Barthes's textual semiotics of literature in *S/Z*?) The answer: The *grand syntagmatique*, as presented by Christian Metz in *Essais I* and discussed in later works also. As noted, this answer is a practical one. It consists in the unanimous resort to the GS by textual analysts, a *fait accompli*. A different point —it seems to be regarded as such by its practitioners since its use has no need of theoretical elaboration or defense.

The armature of the paradox is that the GS premise is both an answer to a question and in itself a question. It is an answer to the question: What segmentation mode? But this answering leads to the posing of a question at another logical level. What is the large syntagmatic arrangement of film in general or of a particular film? The fact that it is also a question allows it to lose its answer status, its dependency on another question or other logical level. When it loses its status as answer, the question which initially defined it disappears also. Attention is focussed on the second question, as question, entirely. Thus the second question substitutes itself for the first and supplants it, even as it answers it. It eclipses the first, blocks it, prevents its being asked, raised, or even seen again.

Practically speaking, this has happened. Text analysts consider no other segmentation modes; nor do they ever relate the problem of segmenta-

tion to *S/Z* directly. They do not derive the method they use from Barthes's theory of textual analysis, nor justify their operation in its terms. The GS, as answer to the question, cuts off access to it. Under these conditions, the answer ceases to be an answer to anything; it is self-standing. It proceeds on its own authority both as specific question and as (unspoken) set of assumptions which eliminates other questions and authorizes this one. Not only is the first question obliterated, so is the connection of the answer to it.

Arguably, the substitution effect is more important than the question of the merits/demerits of the GS as a mode of analysis; because it cuts off inquiry, experimentation, and research in an entire domain of intellectual work. This is a frequent phenomenon in scientific investigation, philosophy, and theoretical endeavor of various sorts. A wrong answer, an incomplete one, even sometimes a good one—may effectively stop further investigation of a problem for a few years or centuries. Of course the situation is far worse where there is no reasoned defense of the solution, where it is buried in the solution itself. It is also worth noting that the imposition of one method of analysis, *any* method, opposes the Barthesian analysis.

What is the position of our analysis in relation to the problem of the two questions? This might also be called the problem of the collapsed questions, since there is but one visible question in place of two. Our task is to liberate the first question, presently eclipsed and submerged. To liberate it means to expose it beneath the structure that obscures it, to permit it to be asked and answered. Once this is done, the question may be addressed, work may be done on it. We do not propose to address the first question in the present essay, enough to discern it and expose it.

How to proceed? We will promote the liberation of the first question by analyzing and clarifying the second question and its operation of substituting for the first. This will entail considering as many aspects of this question as possible. Besides examining the general facts that (1) the GS as general segmentation is unfounded, even unexplained, and (2) that universal resort to the GS blocks consideration of other modes, as well as the theoretical question, why *this* mode?, we are also concerned with the *operation* of the GS as general segmenta-

tion principle in textual analysis. The operational question is in two parts, the theoretical specifications of the GS and how these have developed and the actual studies using the GS themselves. In the present article, we will consider the former, at some other time the latter. Both parts bear upon question two, but work toward clarification of the relations between the two questions, and thereby to liberate the first.

There has been no discourse on the GS as general segmentation of texts; but there has been a considerable literature on the GS. We will examine this carefully, asking by what process of development the GS came to serve as general segmentation principle, a question both historical and theoretical. We will look particularly at those concept structures which qualify it/disqualify it as general segmentation principle.

We will proceed by returning to the original GS and noting subsequent changes and transformations to it. The GS was proposed in *Essais I*. This is by far the fullest treatment of the GS, but we will not dwell long upon it since this book and the place of the GS in it have been the subject of much discussion. (See, among others, "Metz: *Essais I* and Film Theory," *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1975.)

In *Essais I*, Metz put the basic concepts of linguistics to work in analyzing cinema. His method derived closely from Roland Barthes's *Elements of Semiology* (1964), though he no doubt often went back to the latter's linguistics sources also. His initial and recurring method is to ask what is semiotic in cinema, i.e., to search for a site on which semiotic analysis might begin, a precise object which it might address. (Possibly a paradox—he uses the same semiotic tools to determine that site itself, i.e., where the semiotic tools will be engaged, as he does to investigate that site.)

After discussions of many topics he determines this site to be the syntagmatic type. The analogic diversity of film, the uniqueness of each image cannot be the basis for a semiotics of cinema. Rather it is the manner in which these diverse images are combined, in what Metz calls syntagmatic types, which constitutes the object for such a discipline. Thus the *grand syntagmatique*, a rather grand name for the eight syntagmatic types which Metz develops (See "Metz: *Essais I* and Film Theory"), called in the English translation "the large syntag-

mic category of the image-track". Metz sometimes suggests that the GS comprises what there is of language or system in cinema. At other times he suggests that it is just a code among others. Thus a crucial ambivalence about the GS begins in its first enunciation. Though later ambivalences are not necessarily reducible to this, they seem in most cases to relate to it.

It was perhaps the placement of the GS exposition at such a theoretic crossroads that promoted the sense of its primacy, even beyond the many explicit indications of this in the text. Placed at the end of the first sustained inquiry into film semiotics, it is inevitably read as ifs result/consequence/justification. Such placement certainly makes difficult effective argument that the GS is only one code among many.*

Language and Cinema (1971) addresses the vacillation of *Essais I* on the status of the GS. LC (1971) acknowledges this vacillation, though it also vacillates on the vacillation, not to mention the acknowledgment.

In our *Essais sur la signification au cinema* (pp. 212-34), we studied a certain sub-code of montage, the large syntagmatic category ('grand syntagmatique') of the picture-track in the classical film narrative. It was said in various places (notably pp. 122 and 138) that this is only one cinematic code among others; however, in certain passages (p. 138 + *passim*), the importance of this code in relation to the ensemble of the cinematic material is clearly overestimated, and the idea that one could really be dealing, if not with the single code of the cinema, at least with a privileged and particularly central code, was not sufficiently avoided. This vacillation explains, and justifies in part, some of the criticism which has been levelled against us, and which nevertheless remains unfounded. One has especially reproached the study of the large syntagmatic category for not having mentioned certain cinematic elements whose importance is unquestioned. . . . These signifying configurations (such as sound, dialogues, visual point of view, etc.) stem from other codes, the study of which, from the beginning, was excluded by the very definition which we gave the large syntagmatic category (122). However, the exposé did intrinsically lay itself open to these criticisms, to the extent that it failed to establish explicitly enough the pluricodical nature of the cinema, such that the only code (or rather sub-code) which, in the passage in question, was studied in detail tended to appear, from a somewhat hurried reading, as the only code of the cinema. (p. 189)

Language and Cinema makes crystal clear that

*The exact nature of the primacy of the GS in *Essais I* (and later) is itself unclear and shifts depending upon the discussion involved. Is it the primary code, a central code, a base code, or, as the over-all cast of the argument suggests, "the semiotic mechanism" of cinema itself? Still other passages suggest a code among others.

the GS is not a primary or privileged code, or a basic or fundamental one in any sense. It is merely one code among many, indeed a "subcode" of the code of montage. The vacillation concerns whether Metz contradicted this point earlier, failed to make it clearly enough, or what. This point need not concern us here. In itself it is rather unimportant, except that Metz's inability to admit error or even change is symptomatic of his discourse throughout, and sometimes affects its structure.

Language and Cinema defines the status of the GS unequivocally—it is a subcode among others, no more, no less. This settles the question as much as unmistakable prescription can. By this we mean that the question of the GS must now be pursued at a deeper level than that of explicit definitions plus proclamations. Herein we make a direct reconnection with the problem of segmentation and may be able to clarify both.

Language and Cinema declares the GS to be merely one code among many, but the matter is not so simple as this. To see why, we must return to *Essais I* and *Language and Cinema* and the relations between them. The GS was, or appeared to be, an attempt to divide up the filmic chain into successive "autonomous segments"—the GS of the picture track. An Italian semiotician, Emilio Garroni, criticized the GS on just this point in *Semiotica ed estetica* (1968). Garroni's principal point concerns "the codical heterogeneity of the aesthetic object." Applied to cinema, this becomes "the codical heterogeneity of the cinematic language." On this basis, Garroni criticizes the very project of the GS—its division of the filmic chain into autonomous segments. For Garroni, the overall filmic message is a pluri-codical text. If one splits this overall filmic message into smaller material branches (parts), one has not really analyzed it; for one obtains in the end segments which are just as completely heterogeneous but simply smaller in size.

Metz responds to this criticism of the GS with characteristic denial.

This criticism would be valid only if our theory of the types of sequences (= autonomous segments) were presented as a tool for the *total* analysis of the filmic message: but, in our opinion, it constitutes only an attempt to elucidate *one* of the codes of the film, the one which organizes the most common spatio-temporal logic within the sequence. This logical combinatorics is only one of the systems which make up the "grammar" of the cinema (and

thus *a fortiori* which instructs the total message of the film). Concerning the deliberately fragmentary nature of this attempt, the reader is referred to our discussions in . . .

Immediately following this passage, Metz absorbs the substance of Garroni's critique into his own position, in this case definition of the status of the GS.

Thus it is quite true that each of the autonomous segments recognized in a film remains a heterogeneous conglomerate *in other respects*, and constitutes an authentic unity only within a certain perspective, i.e., in the perspective of one of the formal models which may be—as we have said—constructed by abstraction from the concrete text: the autonomous segment is not a unit "of the film," but a unit of one of the systems of the film. Our attempt thus leads in the same direction as do Emilio Garroni's thoughts on the codical heterogeneity of the cinematic language. It would, moreover, be an unusual coincidence if the different systems of the film all gave rise to units, within the filmic chain, whose boundaries coincided exactly with their syntagmatic positioning: it is thus normal that the units of this particular code (= the autonomous segments) are not units for other filmic codes; but we have not said that they were. (pp. 188-191)

Thus pluricodicity becomes one of the principal themes of *Language and Cinema* generally. On this point, Metz cites Hjelmslev as well as Garroni. There are in fact more references to Hjelmslev in the book than to anyone else. Pluricodicity was a concept much discussed in the late sixties and early seventies and Hjelmslev was much in vogue in semiotic circles (especially Parisian) then.

Metz goes on to denounce attempts to devise or determine systems of basic units of the cinema. "It is astonishing that, in so few years of research, so many minimal units have been proposed, . . . each author thinking of a particular code or a particular group of codes, which he more or less clearly identified with the cinematic fact in its entirety" (p. 188).

All these propositions would be more interesting—and their coexistence would provoke less confusion—if, instead of being supposed to apply globally to the "cinema," they clearly focused on some particular, explicitly designated cinematic code (or group of cinematic codes). (Ibid.)

Though acknowledgement of previous ambiguity is uncertain, the standing of present theory is clear in LC, settled by unequivocal prescriptions. From the perspective of the present, these prescriptions of LC seem utterly incompatible with the GS as general segmentation. They implicitly pro-

hibit any such usage, perhaps explicitly; but we know that the GS *is* used for general segmentation and that when it is, it does precisely divide up the entire filmic chain. We asked originally: How did it come about that the GS is used as segmentation principle in textual analyses? At this point we ask it again, with greater force, with more urgency and a sense of paradox, for there seems no reasonable path across these polar oppositions, neither in logic nor experience.

We note two important factors, operative between 1971 and 1975 and after, working to undermine LC's clarity about the place of the GS in the codic domain. Interestingly, each may be seen already at work in the text of LC, though the importance of each has grown considerably since then. One factor is the failure of film semiotics to produce any codic analyses besides that of the GS, and the implications of this. The other is the advent of textual semiotics until it not only predominated over older, systems-oriented ones, but had virtually effaced them.

We recall that the GS is the only code analyzed in *Essais I*. Far more important—it is the only code analyzed in *all* of Metz's texts. This fact plus its placement in the discourse of the first book virtually insure a continuing reading that the GS is a or the primary code of cinema, if not itself equal to what is semiotic in cinema, despite explicit pronouncements to the contrary.

Metz's later books could not alter the initial placement of the GS discussion, though their own placements of GS discussions were quite different. But it *was* to be expected that they would alter its status as the only code of cinema analyzed by Metz. Not so. Metz's subsequent two books and many essays do not analyze any additional codes. A partial exception that proves the rule is a beginning analysis of filmic punctuation in *Essais II* (1972), which turns out to be a kind of footnote to the GS, concerning the ways in which the large syntagms are connected to each other in the filmic text.

This absence of new analyses tends strongly to hold the GS in the central place where most readers, despite occasional warnings, have always placed it. It is also in itself somewhat scandalous. Let us examine the point briefly, taking as focus the explanation of this absence in *Language and*

Cinema, the only place where it is mentioned.

Why have there been no other Metzian analyses of codes or subcodes? *Essais I* barely had space to do the GS; but what of *Language and Cinema*? Called by Metz "a notional book," it is concerned with defining the fundamental notions and concepts of film semiotics. He says in the Conclusion: "The study of cinema thus involves two great tasks: the analysis of the cinematic language system and the analysis of filmic writing." (p. 286) The analysis of the cinematic language system involves the study of cinematic codes and subcodes. Indeed the codes and subcodes which are cinematic constitute, as a block, the cinematic language system. The relations of these and other fundamental notions are elucidated in a passage in Ch. 7, Sec. 6, "The Systemic and the Textual."

The semiotics of the filmic fact ought constantly to make use of three concepts which it can always use with ease. Having defined them, let us repeat them. They are:
(1) filmic texts, which may present different degrees of material scope, the privileged one being the single and entire film (the notion of 'film' in its distributive sense);
(2) textual filmic systems, i.e., filmic systems which correspond to these different texts; and
(3) non-textual filmic systems (codes), which themselves present different degrees of generality (the distinction between code and sub-codes), and which, according to the individual case, may be cinematic or extra-cinematic; those which are cinematic constitute, as a block, the 'cinematic language system'.
We could thus summarize the task of the semiotics of the filmic fact as follows: to analyze film texts in order to discover either textual systems, cinematic codes, or sub-codes. (pp. 149–150)

LC certainly does seem to address "the analysis of the cinematic language system," but it does *not* enumerate, analyze, or even identify particular codes and sub-codes, neither cinematic nor noncinematic, neither "as a block," nor individually. And yet the passage above defines the cinematic language system *as* the aggregate of cinematic codes and subcodes. As a consequence, either LC does not after all study the cinematic language system, hence does not pursue the task of the [semiotic] study of cinema *or* there are other ways to study the cinema than analyzing the CLS *or* other ways to study the CLS than by study of cinematic codes and subcodes. Metz recognizes the problem, at least in part. This is his answer, also located in the four-page Conclusion:

In regard to the first task itself, the reader will perhaps be surprised at not having found here an explicit enumeration of specific codes. This omission was intentional. First, because to study the *status* of a phenomenon (to define it intensionally) and to deploy its entire content (to define it extensionally) are two distinct steps and that, when the 'phenomenon' is rather a constructed notion (as is the case for the cinematic language system), the detailed exposition of distinctiveness is what should take pride of place. Next, because cinematic studies are not yet developed enough; one is not able to seriously advance an explicit list of all the codes and sub-codes. It is, of course, possible, even desirable, to proceed already to a preliminary listing, to propose a beginning of an enumeration, even if incomplete and still approximate. But even this is a task which, in order to be useful, demands specifications which would require a separate book. (p. 286)

Its status as the only code analyzed by film semiotics insures the GS continuing primacy, centrality. Given the battles waged over it, and the unremitting defense of the GS by the Metzians, there was perhaps pressure to use it in some way—besides the analysis for demonstration purposes done by Metz on *Adieu Phillipine*, in *Essais I*. Both factors probably contributed to the ascendance of the GS as principle of general segmentation.

But there is another factor which made it theoretically possible, the most important in accounting for its ascendancy. This is the rise of textual semiotics,* to which we turn.

The older semiotics, of *Elements*, Todorov, Metz's *Essais I*, made system primary in logic and method, and text secondary. The text was the message, the instance, which was implicit or potential in system and hence logically subsumed by it. This congeries of methods called structuralist came to seem reductive in the later sixties, as in Barthes's remark that the narratologists seeking the single model of narrative were like monks attempting to see the entire world in a bean.

One avenue of break from the model derived from the notion of a multiplicity of systems or of codes (depending upon the level of analysis)at work in a particular message or text. Since they could not all operate in a frictionless way, interaction in-

*More specifically, it is the rise of textual semiotics in relation to the GS which we will explore. The theory of the text is "external" to the GS and its early history; but when they interact it plays upon and brings to the fore concepts and doctrines "internal" to the GS. On the latter, see "Metz: *Essais I* and Film Theory." Of course, internal and external are constructs of the analysis, not of the texts under consideration, and even at that level soon become indistinguishable.

volved the possibility of transformation. Once even this much was admitted, a shift of focus from system to text had begun. It came to be seen that it was this transformation process itself which was truly interesting and was also the most important semiotic process. The textual process—destroying, creating, transforming—was itself the center (if there was any); systems and codes were secondary, peripheral, abstract—the mere materials of textual process. The latter alone was concrete. Kristeva, Derrida, and others formulated theoretical models of textual process.

LC is perhaps the high point of Metz's classical semiotics work, sharply distinguishing code-message, system-language, etc. Nevertheless, several elements, theories, terms, formulations of the new textual semiotics begin to operate importantly. This does not make for "consistency"—the book threatens to come apart, both at the level of chapters and within particular chapters. Thus the book's conclusion is called "Cinematic Language System and Filmic Writing." Its four pages suggest retrospectively what the goals of the book have been, but also signal the book's systems *vs.* text semiotics tension:

The study of the cinema thus involves two great tasks: the analysis of the cinematic language system and the analysis of filmic writing. This book, as its title indicates, dealt essentially with the first of these. If the second was discussed, it was in order to try to define its connections (and its differences in distinctiveness) with the first, in order to *situate* them in relation to one another. (p. 286)

Chapter V, "From Code to System: Message to Text," Chapter VI, "Textual Systems," and Chapter VII, "Textuality and 'Singularity' " are devoted to filmic writing and indeed seem different from the other chapters (devoted to the CLS), as though written later.

The well-known (re)definition of film semiotics of LC's pp. 149–150 quoted above attempts to strike a balance between the demands of systemic and textual semiotics. It is still mainly systemic, attempting to acknowledge the text, but projecting it in the main as the non-transformative combination of clear and knowable codes.

Later work by Metz will transform this balance decisively in favor of text. *Essais II* has no particular emphasis upon the text, principally because nearly all of it was written before LC, even though

it appeared the year later (1972). But there is reference to text, indeed the *only* reference to his previous work, in "The Imaginary Signifier" (1975). Metz here rejects his former concept of *a* textual system in favor of multiple textual systems. Or, as he puts it alternately, "the indefinite textual system as I now see it . . . this perpetual possibility of a finer, or else less apparent structuration . . . of the registration of a new *significatory pressure* which does not annul the preceding ones (as in the unconscious where everything is accumulated)." (pp. 35-36)

The increasing emphasis on the filmic text has entailed as one important consequence the loosening of the firm outlines of codes and of their differentiation from each other established by LC. In the latter we have codes "interacting" with each other. Later we have codes transforming each other in the textual process: and still later, talk of "significatory pressures" (based, it seems, on the Freudian theory of drives). Perhaps as of this point, the notion of code itself recedes or disappears.

It is against this background that the GS becomes less and less a code among other codes, since codes themselves tend to recede and the borders between codes to disappear. But its original function as division of the filmic chain remains and, like a long repressed chamber of the unconscious, rises to the surface when there is no longer any force to oppose it.

The theoretical operator which triggers this final ascendancy is a fundamental principle of the new semiotic constellation—the freedom of the analyst in choosing an analytic procedure, including a segmentation mode. The mantles of various prescriptions were off—one could do what one wanted. So why not use the GS, familiar to all from early days, even a kind of habit. And, while at it, why not the earlier GS, understood to divide the entire text-message—choosing one's reading of a method of analysis was part of the new freedom also. Under Barthes's "analyst's free choice," the old constraints on the GS division of the message no longer applied. The GS had come full circle, or rather moved in a spiral, for it had arrived not where it had been but a new place, parallel to it.

A question we have not examined carefully is whether use of the GS as general segmentation of the filmic text necessarily implies a division of the message in Garroni's sense? Can it be read as a division for purposes of the analysis which implies no judgment concerning the filmic message as a whole? It merely divides up the text in an arbitrary way in order to be able to talk about it.

The substance of our argument has been that the GS is *not* an arbitrary system of division. It is heavily determined by a number of assumptions about the filmic message, despite disclaimers and occasional declarations to the contrary. Also, the notion of segmentation *or* the practice of segmentation, or both, implies a virtual segmentation of the message, even if theoretically non-binding on later work. At the least it works *as though* it segmented the message, both in its own operation and for those stages of the analysis which follow segmentation.

Proof: It cannot be itself a codic analysis, since it is the division on which the codic analyses will operate. This is why segmentation is always and must be the *first* step of a textual analysis. It proposes that division of the material upon which the analysis proper will operate. Barthes's segmentation cuts out a piece as it goes, only in order to watch the codes pass and intertwine through it, around it, in relation to it. Barthes's segmentation is a division of the message, but the division has no standing other than convenience: another reading will propose a different division. GS segmentation, on the other hand, is always the same for a given message, at least in principle. At least the GS aspires to such repeatability, objectivity, universality, and is still defined so. How could the GS segmentation of one film hold good for all subsequent analyses of it unless it operated on the message itself rather than as an extension of the text analysis?

This is inevitable where an *a priori* scheme is involved: it is the meaning of *a priori*. The level of generality at which general segmentation must operate *and* the uniformity and non-adaptibility of the GS concept itself, when combined with installation of the GS as general segmentation principle, makes it something it never was before, even in *Essais I*, an *a priori* scheme for the division of the filmic message in the abstract,and of all particular filmic messages.

This question and various other strands we have

pursued lead us on to consideration of the GS-based textual analyses themselves. Many questions of interest can only be dealt with on that ground. But this takes us beyond the present piece. For now we will make a few summary points concerning what we have done here.

The advent of textual semiotics has been the principal factor in enthroning the GS as scheme of general segmentation. But this has occurred through the special situation of film semiotics and the GS, their particular concept structures, etc. It is useful to trace the interactions between this advent and the GS stage by stage, a study which we have sketched only.

The use of the GS as general segmentation is not authorized by any Metz text. Yet the users of the GS write as though its use in this way was clearly authorized and well-understood. In fact, as general segmentation, it is a method without a theory. Resting in principle on the preference of the analyst, each of the latter defers to it as to authority. Conclusion: the text analysts use a tool which they do not understand; in a partial sense, at least, they do not know what they are doing in their analytical work.

The use of the GS reflects its complex history, including those theoretical disputes carried on in its name. Text-analysts cannot claim to be free of these conflicts, but must deal with them.

The use of the GS as general segmentation is not the segmentation discussed by Barthes. Even in his strictures of permissiveness, there are restraints and specifications. Resort to an *a priori* codical analysis such as the GS is not what Barthes's discussion indicates. In Barthes, the analyst has freedom but also responsibility for the methods used, their appropriateness to the task, etc.

It might be argued after all that the analyst's free choice is real, but by habit and familiarity, the analyst chooses the GS. It is, in any case, the only scheme around. But habit and convenience are matters of history and culture, not of nature. Habit must be questioned, interrogated, justified. Also, resort to "habit" may result in a logical shifting of levels, hence in the transformation of apparently constant objects. This occurs when an old habit is put to work on a new problem. Such a case is a scheme of codical analysis, familiar also from theoretical dispute, resorted to by familiarity for the division of the whole film.

Books

LUIS BUÑUEL:
A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

By Francisco Aranda. Translated by David Robinson. New York: Da Capo Press, 1976. $4.95.

THE CINEMA OF LUIS BUÑUEL

By Freddy Buache. Translated by Peter Graham. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1973. $2.95.

The fact that there are now at least four books in English on Buñuel's films is deceptively encouraging. Together they total about 850 pages of text, but only about a tenth of those pages are devoted to any kind of critical analysis. Ado Kyrou's *Luis*

Buñuel: An Introduction (1963) is perhaps the most imbalanced, with ten, maybe fifteen pages of criticism and the rest stills, appendices, and synopses. In Raymond Durgnat's *Luis Buñuel* (1970), the overabundant stills all but choke out the text. And "criticism" in Buache's *Cinema of Luis Buñuel* means a synopsis punctuated by a graphic summarizing image or two. (For instance: Buñuel, in *The Milky Way,* "dynamites a spiritual edifice that is little more than a mirage . . ."; in *El,* the hero's urges "seethe in the pressure cooker of religious and bourgeois principles.") Aranda's book repeats much of the Kyrou material but in its comprehensiveness is the most valid biographically of the four, if its pretensions toward being "critical" go largely unfulfilled. To the limited extent that it